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Número de convocatoria del alumno

Nombre y apellido(s) del alumno

Número del colegio

Nombre del colegio

Convocatoria de exámenes (mayo o noviembre)

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Año

2013

Asignatura del Programa del Diploma en la que se ha inscrito la monografía: ENGLISH B (Group 2)

(En el caso de una monografía en lenguas, señale si se trata del Grupo 1 o el Grupo 2.)

Título de la monografía: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEADING IN COMMERCIAL AVIATION?

### Declaración del alumno

*El alumno debe firmar esta declaración; de lo contrario, es posible que no reciba una calificación final.*

Confirmando que soy el autor de este trabajo y que no he recibido más ayuda que la permitida por el Bachillerato Internacional.

He citado debidamente las palabras, ideas o gráficos de otra persona, se hayan expresado estos de forma escrita, oral o visual.

Sé que el máximo de palabras permitido para las monografías es 4.000, y que a los examinadores no se les pide que lean monografías que superen ese límite.

Esta es la versión final de mi monografía.

Firma del alumno:

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*El supervisor debe completar este informe, firmar la declaración y luego entregar esta portada junto con la versión final de la monografía al coordinador del Programa del Diploma.*

Nombre y apellido(s) del supervisor [MAYÚSCULAS]:

*Si lo considera adecuado, escriba algunos comentarios sobre el contexto en que el alumno desarrolló la investigación, las dificultades que encontró y cómo las ha superado (ver página 13 de la guía para la monografía). La entrevista final con el alumno puede ofrecer información útil. Estos comentarios pueden ayudar al examinador a conceder un nivel de logro para el criterio K (valoración global). No escriba comentarios sobre circunstancias adversas personales que puedan haber afectado al alumno. En el caso en que el número de horas dedicadas a la discusión de la monografía con el alumno sea cero, debe explicarse este hecho indicando cómo se ha podido garantizar la autoría original del alumno. Puede adjuntar una hoja adicional si necesita más espacio para escribir sus comentarios.*

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He leído la versión final de la monografía, la cual será entregada al examinador.

A mi leal saber y entender, la monografía es el trabajo auténtico del alumno.

He dedicado 

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 horas a discutir con el alumno su progreso en la realización de la monografía.

Firma del supervisor:

Fecha:

## Formulario de evaluación (para uso exclusivo del examinador)

Criterios de evaluación	Nivel de logro			
	Máximo	Examinador 2	Máximo	Examinador 3
A Formulación del problema de investigación	2	1	2	
B Introducción	2	0	2	
C Investigación	4	0	4	
D Conocimiento y comprensión del tema	4	1	4	
E Argumento razonado	4	1	4	
F Aplicación de habilidades de análisis y evaluación apropiadas para la asignatura	4	1	4	
G Uso de un lenguaje apropiado para la asignatura	4	1	4	
H Conclusión	2	1	2	
I Presentación formal	4	2	4	
J Resumen	2	2	2	
K Valoración global	4	1	4	
Total (máximo 36)		11		

# **To what extent is the English language leading in commercial aviation?**

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School Name:

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## **Abstract**

This extended essay is the study of the extent to which the English language is the leading language in commercial aviation. The study surveys the history of aviation and the consequences for language use. The scope and methodology of the research was the research of the first flight and the first commercial flight. Also, a primary source was used since I interviewed a pilot of a national company, a Spanish one to give me points of view more in depth of the topic. This was then combined with my own knowledge of the topic.

Eventually reaching to the conclusions that English is the leading language since it was United States the pioneer of commercial aviation and because nowadays is the most spoken language around the world. However, it is not the only one used. Spanish and French are also common within airplanes.

## **Introduction**

The dream of societies even from the times when humans lived in caves has been to be able to fly. We have wanted to be able to do what birds do. We always looked and look beyond our capacity and dream for hard things to achieve.

People even tried to design human wings based on bird ones but that did not work since our body it is not prepared to fly as other animals do. We were just not designed by nature to do it.

But it was a dream that no one was going to forget and started becoming more popular during centuries. Even, it is something that starts from the infancy of everyone and that never ends.

This desire to fly transformed on the desire of wanting to fly to be able to travel around the world since at the beginning was only a dream for wanting to see the world from above.

This extended essay is based on aviation since in my surrounding I have had a lot of influence on this and I have always had a curiosity of how it all started, why it developed to where it is now and why do pilots use mostly English and not any other language, as the main language of each country.

Some arguments are going to be exposed in the analysis to support the fact of the use of the English within this topic and some examples will be given to back to arguments. Even, the experience of a pilot will be said.

## Analysis

This was achieved by the human society in 1903 by the Wright Brothers in United States.<sup>1</sup> They were pioneers on flying. But this didn't carry passengers and the rest of society also wanted to try it. Indeed, only ten years before commercial flights started.

Commercial aviation refers to the carrying of passengers or of cargo. However, I am going to focus on commercial flights that carry mostly passengers. Impressively, that started nearly a century ago.

The first flight that took place the first of January of 1914 in, unpredictably, United States was a revolutionary and expensive moment in time. Only being a one passenger carrier but it impressed the whole world. And expensive because it cost the passenger, who was the man that offered the most, four hundred dollars of that time that would be equivalent to five thousand dollars of today. The language used in this flight was of course not other than English, that was because it was in United States, an English speaking country.<sup>2</sup>

From that moment in time commercial flights started being more popular as the years went over and since it was developing, there were more technological innovations, the

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<sup>1</sup> First Flight, <http://firstflight.open.ac.uk/>, (12/November/2012)

<sup>2</sup> First Flight Centennial, copyright 2009, first flightcentennial.org, <http://www.firstflightcentennial.org/the-first-commercial-flight/>, (12/November/2012)



maximum capacity of passengers that a flight could have also increased. Nowadays, a plane can carry a maximum of around the quantity of eight hundred passengers. This is an impressive figure if we think about the fact that it all started being only of one passenger capacity.

The revolution for flying was all around the world and more and more countries started to create their own airlines or to work with airlines of other countries. This meant that more languages started being around the commercial aviation world. But, few people spoke English, even nowadays the majority of the world population does but not everyone speaks it, and each country used its own language.

Actually, aviation is one of the reasons that could be considerate for the spread of the English language around the world. Even, inside the own aviation companies of commercial flights the English has been settled as a leading language not very long ago.

I had an interview with a pilot of this time and he still remembers when he started flying as a commercial pilot in Spain and everything was in Spanish, that it was only fourteen years ago. He also remembers that not every language was used. There were only three leading ones that can look a lot to us now since right now there is only one. The three languages were English, French and Spanish. Also, he recalls that when it all started being in English since around the world it started being the leading language was not so much time ago, fifteen years ago. (Interview number 1)

However, it all started with a plane, a company and a language. But globalization has played a great role in the world and in aviation.

Nowadays, one of the most important ways to travel around the world crossing the oceans, and quicker ways, are the airplanes. There have been working for nearly a century. And people use them all around the world.

Also, the people who work inside have to be taken in consideration. Since English is the leading language but other languages are also used and everyone can have a different mother tongue. Actually, there are two groups in which we can separate the whole crew and talk about each one in more detail about their use of the English. These two separate groups are the pilots and the flying attendants. Both of them are worldly known for what they do but just in case I would do a brief summary for each one.

## **Pilots**

Pilots are normally three to four in a flight, normally two of them carry it and the rest are for support. Maybe when carry it is said, some people imagine a person really driving it as a car. But planes do not work with the basic technology that cars use, it is quite difficult to explain, even I find it very difficult to understand it myself and in my family there is a great influence of aviation.

But what I can say is that for taking off, landing and sometimes for turbulences pilots use the joystick but also some of bottoms that they have all around the cabin. And for the rest of the flight they use those bottoms which only they know how they work because there are a lot and there functioning is not simple, is rather complicated.

During their hard work, the language that they are expected to use is English. However, they do not use it all the time, well this depends on the individual and what is their mother tongue.

This main language is used now all around the world by all the companies, airlines, existing.

For example, all the manuals that they have and use in the cabin and the labels of all the equipment is in English.

Then, the language used in the radio when communicating with the control towers is mostly English. Sometimes, another language is used, this can slightly vary depending

on the country, but not only on the country where the airline is from, also from the country the plane is going to.

As an example, in some or more or less most of the South American countries the language spoken by the tower control and the pilots is Spanish, or at least when the company is from another Spanish speaking country.

Commodity also enters here, since for two people with their strong language being Spanish is easier to communicate in that language. And that argument can be taken to one of the three languages or maybe to French and Spanish since English is the compulsory one.

Another argument is that checklists that are gone through before taking over and landing sometimes also varies on the language are done with. Of course, they are all of them in English but they are not always said in this language.

A regional airline of Spain can be used for this argument. Iberia, most of the pilots, since in this airline young pilots are not common, are not characterized by having a strong root of English because the main language around the world in general has not always been this one. So these checklists are sometimes done in Spanish, but of course they are always done.

This brings another argument. The age of the pilots, of course when the pilot is older is more experience therefore is better but since before English was not the leading language there are some who do not know English as much English as a pilot formatting now. Also, it can be said that when it comes to communication with other countries

younger pilots will be able to communicate better since most of them have a higher level of English. But of course what they know is what they need to know, the requirements are always full filled.

I had another interview with the pilot mentioned before and he narrated to me the occasion, a couple of years ago, when the company wanted to cross out the image of Iberia pilots having a low level of English and not being skilled enough in the language of English for what they had to do. The company forced all the pilots, which are the most important of the crew to have a competent level of English because are the ones who communicate with the tower and other departments of the airports to be able to fly, to take an aviation test. This is done to check the level of English focusing on what they use on a daily basis when working, flying. Captain Sancho Villanova said that he knew what he had to know, that he was prepared for it and he was secure that he was going to pass since he is perfectly able to communicate in English in his work. He did not had to study because for more than half of the month, that is for what they have to work, they are using that language and going through all the important terms you ought to know, there is no need for revise. Of course I did not ask him if he did pass or not because I could guess the answer and as he was reaching the end on the story he firmly assured that he had passed it with no problem. (Interview number 2)

There is also to mention the special idiom or terms that are used in aviation, which it also used for other matters as in military matters. These terms are called the NATO phonetic alphabet and it is based on the English language since when it was set it was already the leading language around the world. This shows the importance and the role

that English plays in the communication within aviation. This alphabet consist of that each letter of the normal alphabet has a name, so it is easier to understand when there is the need of giving details, as the name of the plane, the name of the airport and coordinates.<sup>3</sup>

This alphabet is very essential for a pilot when working. They have it so incorporated in their minds that they even use it in a regular basis in their lives outside the plane.

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<sup>3</sup> Phonetic Alphabet Tables, <http://www.osric.com/chris/phonetic.html>, (15/November/2012)

### **Flying Attendants**

In the other part of the plane that it is used, not including where the cargo goes, is where flying attendants work. They serve and attend the passengers. Also, they give announcements and program any communiqué or movie that is shown in the televisions that there are around the plane. The languages that they have to use are normally two but there are sometimes required three, more is better.

For example, the company used already before for another example was Iberia, a leading company in this country, Spain. The language that of course is mostly used is English but when there is an announcement from the crew toward the passengers it is done in English and in most times in the spoken language of the country where is at the moment, normally between Spanish and French. They use these three main languages. English as the principal one, Spanish and sometimes French, as said before depending on the country where it is, the two languages, Spanish and French, vary.

Also, the movies and communiqués that are displayed are compulsory in English and then mostly in Spanish as the second language. Eventually, in Iberia Spanish is treated as the first language since it is a Spanish company and English as a second language when it comes to the use of the language of flying attendants.

However, this is Iberia, an airline from Spain, so therefore the language that is mostly use from Spanish and French is Spanish.

In general, in other airlines, the main language is of course English and then a second language is sometimes use and it can change depending on the airline and on the country.

Something to add is that the manuals that the flying attendant have and use, as the pilots, are in English. That is an assurance that every single one of them is able to use this language for their work.

Also, the test that the pilots had to do in Iberia as Captain Sancho Villanova told us, it was not required since it is not that important their work when everything goes all right.

Of course, the difference of importance between the two different jobs that exists in the plane during the flight is because of the studies and preparation that each one is required to have and the responsibility that each one carries. Pilots are required the studies necessary, where flying attendants are only required to do a course. Then, pilots carry in their hands and their conscience much more responsibility since they carry the plane and responsible for the functioning of the plane.

This is why, for example, in Iberia only the pilots were forced to take this test that measured their level of English basing it on what they need for their job.

Something to add is the, before mentioned, NATO phonetic alphabet, because of the communication between these two groups, pilots and flying attendants, flying attendants normally also know and use it because it is a good and quick way to do it.



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, aviation started not long ago and has satisfied the desire of humans to be able to fly and see the ground from above, from the sky, going through the clouds.

In aviation, English is widely used by all cabin crew but there are some exceptions on where it is used during the whole flight, this means that it is not always used as the first option. However, it is a compulsory language and most of the information it is displayed is in English.

One of the reasons for this language being the leading one is that it all started in United States, an English speaking country. If it had been another country the pioneer of aviation and then there would be very possible that the leading language in aviation would be another language.

Also one of the reasons for this being the principal language in aviation is that English is the leading language in the world, is the language with the greater quantity of people that speak it. So maybe if globalization and advance during the years did not put English as the ruling language then the main language in aviation could have been another one. For example, if the king language was Chinese or if in the future the English was dethroned by this language or other then the language use as principal in aviation would be different or could change. It depends on the development and globalization, where it has carried us to and where it will carry us in the future.

Another argument used in the analysis is that sometimes depending on the strong language of the member of crew, the main language of the country where the company

is from and the language where the plane flies to it varies. However, only a small quantity of little details is able to change because if not we would go back in time when there was no common language, as Captain Sancho Villanova told us that he could remember from not such a long time ago.

Then, the analysis was done differentiating the two different types of jobs that are being done in a plane during a flight. Since the level of English can vary due to the requirements that are asked for pilots and flying attendants and the responsibility that each one carries. Each group has the requirement to use a language more or less. But of course, English is always required to be used.

Also, it was mentioned within the pilots, however, flying attendants also learn it. This is the NATO phonetic alphabet which is based in the English language. This is a very important argument to support the fact that English has developed and ended as the main language used in aviation. The NATO alphabet has that importance and is that relative because in the way, it is used to communicate. It is a very significant way within commercial aviation.

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